

Town of Lexington Community Garden Policies

Updated February 2022

The Town of Lexington Community Garden is located on public conservation land and therefore falls under the jurisdiction of the Lexington Conservation Commission. Volunteer garden coordinators are responsible for day-to-day management of the garden, but it is the responsibility of all gardeners to act as caretakers of the garden. The following policies were developed by the Conservation Commission and Conservation Division staff.

1. Plot Assignments

- a) Plots are available on a first-come, first-serve basis, with preference given to returning gardeners. Plots are assigned by the garden coordinators in this order:
 - (1) Returning gardeners
 - (2) Returning gardeners wishing to change plots
 - (3) New gardeners
 - (4) Returning gardeners wishing for more spacePreference will be given to new gardeners who are Lexington residents; non-residents will be awarded plots based on availability after the new gardener registration period has ended.
- b) Returning gardener and new gardener registration deadlines are set each year, usually for an early April date. (For this year's deadline dates, contact your garden coordinator or check the registration letter or Conservation website – www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/pages/community-gardens). Registrations and plot fees are due in full by these deadlines. Returning gardener plots that have not been claimed by that date will be opened up to new gardeners.
- c) **Only one plot per household/residential address may be assigned at the beginning of the season.** If there are extra plots available once all new gardeners from that season have been accommodated, second plots may be assigned based on availability. **Plots are not transferrable.**
- d) If you need special accommodations in order to participate, please contact the Conservation Division at 781-862-0500 x84532.

2. In the Garden

- a) Gardens are open dawn until dusk, seven days a week.
- b) Maintenance:
 - i. **All gardeners are expected to maintain their gardens actively throughout the growing season (April-November);** this includes watering, timely weeding and harvesting, spring preparation, fall clean-up, and any other plot related maintenance. Regular weeding will minimize the dispersal of unwanted seeds into neighboring plots and harvesting crops before they rot will help control rodents and other garden pests. If you plan to be away for an extended period of time (more than one week), please make arrangements with other gardeners to maintain your plot(s).
 - ii. Each gardener is responsible for maintaining the garden pathways immediately surrounding their plot. All gardening activities and materials must be kept within the boundaries of each assigned plot; take special care to contain berries, squashes, and other vining plants within the confines of your assigned plot.
 - iii. Gardens not started by June 1 or unmaintained (as defined above) during the growing season may be subject to forfeiture without refund.
 - iv. Each gardener is expected to contribute time to the upkeep of the shared garden area. While no specific time requirement has been set, gardeners should expect to contribute 2-4 hours per calendar year.
 - v. Upkeep tasks may include: weed-whacking garden pathways, gates, and fences; cleaning up trash/litter/debris; removing rocks from the garden; turning compost; removing vegetation from fences; filling water barrels; spring and fall preparation work; repair work; mentoring a new gardener etc. If in doubt, check with the garden coordinator for task suggestions.
- c) Gardens are intended for the growing of vegetables, fruits, berries, and flowers for household use or donation (e.g. to food banks); they are not intended for commercial use or profit. Planted trees (including fruit trees) are not permitted in plots. Berry bushes, other tall plants (e.g. sunflowers), and all structures (e.g. fencing, trellising, etc.) are limited to 6' high so as not to shade neighboring gardeners' plots. All plants and structures shall be located where they will not negatively affect neighboring plots with shade.

- d) Only organic pesticides, fertilizers, and other soil amendments (such as compost, manure, bone meal, lime, etc.) are permitted. Non-organic/synthetic pesticides, fertilizers, and other soil amendments are not permitted; only use un-treated, un-painted wooden stakes (no pressure treated or painted materials). If in doubt as to the acceptability of a particular treatment or amendment, check with the Garden Coordinator, Conservation Division, or the Organic Materials Review Institute (www.omri.org).
- e) Cover crops are provided by the Conservation Division at the end of the season to stabilize soils and provide a green manure; all gardeners are encouraged to cover their plots.
- f) No permanent structures (e.g. sheds, raised-bed gardens, concrete footings, treated lumber) are permitted without approval from the Town. All structures (e.g. fencing, trellising, etc.) should be limited to 6' high and be located where they will not negatively affect neighboring plots with shade.
- g) In order to conserve water (and save water costs):
 - i) Talk with your garden coordinator to learn how the water system works at your garden.
 - ii) **Unattended watering is not permitted.**
 - iii) Notify the garden coordinator of any leaks in the water line or problems with the water system.
 - iv) If your garden uses large barrels to store water, **always refill barrels after you withdraw water from them.**
 - v) Make sure all faucets are off when you are finished watering.
 - vi) As much as possible, mulch with leaves or hay to reduce water evaporation.
- h) Parking is permitted only in designated areas and during times that gardens are open. Vehicles should not be driven on garden land (except designated parking areas) without permission of the Conservation Division (via the garden coordinator).
 - i) At Idylwilde, cars may park in a pull-off area entering from Middle Street; cars may also pull in from Lincoln Street where the Idylwilde Conservation Area sign is and park in the grass but may not drive around the garden.
- i) Dogs are permitted per the Lexington Conservation Land regulations (see www.lexingtonma.gov/conservation/conland.cfm).
- j) No soil may be removed from garden plots.
- k) Lexington Community Gardens are CARRY IN/CARRY OUT; please take all trash and other debris with you.
- l) The Town of Lexington shall not be liable for any injury to persons or property resulting from community gardening activity.
- m) At Idylwilde Community Garden only:
 - i) Structures (e.g. fencing, trellising, etc) in and around your plot may remain in place year- round provided that the structures
 - (a) Are installed as a "temporary" structures that can be easily removed if needed (e.g. no concrete footings or treated lumber).
 - (b) Are intended to prevent herbivory from small mammals and/or to support plant growth.
 - (c) Structures up to 6' high are allowed, but should be located where they will not negatively affect neighboring plots with shade.
 - (d) All non-biodegradable items located in plot must either be neatly stored or secured by November 15th (or fall clean- up date) so they weather the winter months (e.g. sticks/ rebar bundled, plastic and cloths weighed down and secured, perimeter fencing removed or tidied, dead vegetation removed from fences and trellising).
 - ii) Plots are not plowed or tilled by Conservation staff. There is a walk behind tiller available for gardeners' use, if you wish to till your plot.
 - iii) All rocks removed from garden plots must be placed outside of the garden perimeter fence in area designated by signage to allow for mowing to occur safely; DO NOT throw rocks in field.
 - iv) The perimeter fence gates should be kept closed at all times to prohibit wildlife from entering the garden area.
 - v) Five communal compost areas located within the garden perimeter fencing are for vegetative matter only; all compost use must be approved by the garden coordinator to ensure that it is ready for use and is shared fairly among all gardeners.
 - vi) **ONLY garden within your plot; NO gardening along perimeter fence or in other parts of the garden area.**

3. Penalties

- a) Failure to comply with above policies may result in a loss of future gardening privileges. The garden coordinator or Conservation Commission may require that a non-compliant gardener forfeit their plot. Appeals may be made to the Conservation Commission.
- b) Failure to comply with the town general bylaws may result in the loss of future gardening privileges, a monetary fine, or other action as outlined in the town general bylaws depending on the offense. Town general bylaws can be found here: <https://ecode360.com/LE1818>.

Your compliance with the above policies will help ensure that everyone has an enjoyable and prosperous garden.